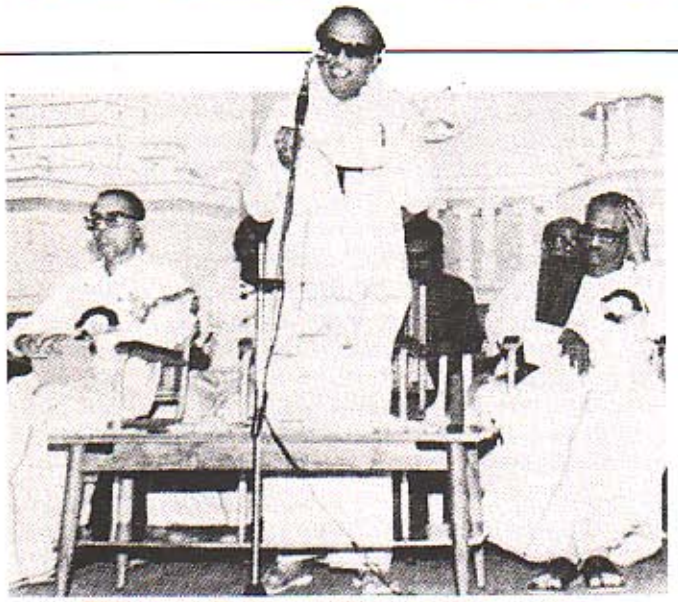
75p

Tamil TIMES

Vol VIII No.2 ISSN 0266-4488 JANUARY 1989

DMK SWEEPS TO POWER IN TAMIL NADU



DMK leader, M. Karunanidhi addressing a meeting

The Dravida Munnetra Kazhaham (DMK) won a landslide victory in the elections held on 19 January in the South Indian State of Tamil Nadu, securing over 170 seats in the Legislative Assembly of 234 seats. DMK leader, the 65 year old M. Karunanidhi, is expected to become Chief Minister.

The AIADMK, which split into two factions after the death of M.G. Ramachandran, one led by his widow, Janaki, and the other by Jayalalitha, were defeated badly.

The rejection of Congress (I), pushed into third place, is regarded as a personal defeat for the Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, who staked his political reputation visiting the State thirteen times to address campaign meetings.

★ **Sri Lanka Election Scene**

★ The Premadasa Phenomenom

★ *1988 Presidential Election*

★ **Mrs Bandaranaike challenges Premadasa**

THE 'KING' & THE 'KINGMAKER'

President R. Premadasa and S. Thondaman, President Ceylon Workers' Congress

". . . the people of Indian origin in Sri Lanka would solidly back the UNP candidate Premadasa. There were roughly about 1.3 million people of recent Indian origin in the island. All these votes go solidly to Mr. Premadasa. This is a committment made by me. As President of the CWC, I have committed myself and my people will follow."

S. Thondaman, The Hindu. 5.12.88

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Tamil TIMES
ISSN 0266-4488
ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION
UK/India/Sri Lanka. . . £10/US$20
All other countries. . . £15/US$30
Published monthly by
TAMIL TIMES LTD
P.O. BOX 121
SUTTON, SURREY SM1 3 TD
UNITED KINGDOM

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LET THE PEOPLE DECIDE

Two events of fundamental significance to the Tamil people of Sri Lanka occurred in the run-up to the recently held presidential elections and before the dissolution of parliament. Firstly, the parliament enacted legislation granting citizenship rights to all 'stateless' Tamils living in the central highlands of the island. Now the plantation Tamils who were arbitrarily and cruelly deprived of their basic citizenship rights in 1948 have regained those rights. Secondly, the parliament unanimously adopted a constitutional amendment making Tamil also an official language of the country along with Sinhala. Thus the Sinhala only policy introduced in 1956 has been dumped into the dustbin of history.

That the two main Sinhala dominated parties, UNP and SLFP, supported these measures in parliament, after using both these issues for vote-grabbing purposes all these years, is of no less significance and reflects a qualitative change in the politics of the country. The lesson that the Tamil people of the island cannot be held in subjugation would appear to have been learnt after the death and devastation of recent years.

The much maligned Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement and the resulting legislation enacted by parliament provided for a measure of provincial autonomy on the basis of devolution of certain legislative and executive powers and the merger of the two northern and eastern provinces (although subject to a referendum) as a means to protect the national identity of the Tamil speaking people. A majority of Tamils, including Tamil political parties and militant groups, do not regard the devolution package as satisfying all their aspirations. They argue for an enhancement of the devolved powers giving more autonomy for the Tamil areas. But disputes and disagreements have surfaced among the Tamil people, political parties and militant groups as to the method, means and tactics to be adopted in achieving the enhancement of Tamil autonomy.

These disputes and disagreements manifested openly when elections for the North-East Provincial Council were called. The LTTE, still in military confrontation with the IPKF, called for a boycott of the elections. Three militant groups, EPRLF, ENDLF and TELO participated in the elections. The TULF, while not participating in the elections, called upon the Tamil people to vote at the elections. The PLOTE and EROS did not participate. In the event, the Provincial Council elections were held. There was reduced participation in the elections by the people. The LTTE's boycott call was reasonably successful in the north and less successful in the east. Since the Provincial Council elections, the fractricidal conflict between the LTTE and the EPRLF has intensified and many have fallen victims in gun battles.

Now parliamentary General Elections are to be held on February 15. All Tamil political parties and militant groups, except the LTTE, have decided to participate in these elections and submitted nominations. The TULF which has struck an alliance with the EPRLF, ENDLF and TELO are contesting all the districts in the north-eastern province. PLOTE's political wing, DPLF, is contesting in the Jaffna and Nuwara Eliya districts. All Ceylon Tamil Congress is contesting in the Jaffna district. EROS has put forward a block of independent candidates both in the north and east. The LTTE has decided not to field any candidates denouncing those who participate in the elections as 'traitors' with a promise to destroy them.

Whether the LTTE is right in boycotting or all other parties and groups which are participating in these elections are right is not the question. The fact is that there are two positions. The LTTE has the democratic right to adopt its own position of boycotting the elections for whatever reason it deems justifiable and canvas support among the people for a boycott. At the same time, the other parties and groups which have submitted nominations have also the democratic right to go to the people and ask them to exercise their vote. More fundamentally, the Tamil people must have the right to support either position or stay neutral. No individual, party or group which does not recognise these mutual rights and act accordingly has the right to talk about 'democracy', 'freedom', and 'rights and aspirations' of the people.

Already evidence is emerging that fratricidal killings among Tamil militant groups are on the increase. If members of the Tamil community are to consolidate the gains they have already achieved at tremendous cost and suffering, and further advance to win their legitimate aspirations, they should be spared of the self-destructive trauma of brutalisation, indiscriminate violence, fratricidal killings and the day to day terror of the T-56 and AK47.

No individual, party or group has the right to arrogate to itself the right to be sole spokesman or representative of the people. All the groups and parties purport to speak and fight for and on behalf of the people. They also assume that they know what the interests of the people are. If that were true, and if they are confident of the correctness of their respective positions, they should have the courage to trust the people to take the right decision according to their own perceptions and understanding. Those who claim to have the support of the people must not display; use or threaten to use weapons of human destruction.

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COLOMBO NEWSLETTER

by Chithra

THE GENERAL ELECTION SCENE IN SRI LANKA

An aggregate of over 1300 candidates belonging to nine political parties (or groupings) and nine independent blocks have submitted their nominations for the February 1989 general elections which are being held after 11 long years to elect 196 members to the 225-seat Parliament. The balance 29 'bonus seats' will be filled from the 'national list' depending on the proportion of votes each party or block obtains nationally.

Except in the case of the first general election in 1947 in which the United National Party, which eventually formed the government, obtained less than the combined opposition, the country's electoral scene has been dominated by the UNP and the Sri Lanka Freedom Party.

The new proportional representation system, the preferential vote, the national list and the large number of parties contesting on their own, make this general election an unusual and unpredictable one in comparison to the previous ones.

These elections are not expected to reproduce the landslide victories that the UNP and the SLFP have been scoring in the past under the first-past-the-post system, a British legacy bequeathed to Sri Lanka when it was granted independence in 1948. For the first time, the proportional representation system is to be implemented.

Sri Lanka has a highly politicised electorate and the voter turnout is generally as high as 80 per cent and on occasions even more than that. If the JVP in tbe south and the LTTE in the north do not repeat their performance of the recent past, that is to undermine the democratic electoral process by force, there is no reason to doubt that the poll will be very high on February 15.

The UNP, after a 11 year rule marked by unprecedented chaos, violence, erosion of democratic rights, death and devastation, 50,000 foreign troops in the country etc, is not held high in popular esteem. However, even at the worst of times, it has an irreducible voter-base of nearly 30 per cent. That is not sufficient to assure certain victory.

The SLFP has never come to power without some form of alliance in the past, normally with the traditional left parties. Those parties are contesting under the banner of the United Socialist Alliance on this occasion. The SLFP's encounter in forming the People's Democratic Alliance just prior to the recently held presidential elections has turned out to be a disasterous debacle. However, the SLFP also can rely on an unassailable voter-base of nearly 20 per cent. The balance 50 per cent is up for grabs.

It is in this context the role of the smaller parties, both of the left and right, and the vote of the minorities – the Tamils including those of the plantations, the Muslims and the Christians – assume a political clout which they never had before.

What has made the votes of the minorities indispensable to the major political parties is the introduction of the system of proportional representation. Writing in THE SUNDAY TIMES (1.1.89),Kendel Hopman sums up the position as follows:

'Neither the UNP nor the SLFP can afford to ignore the minority votes anymore. The PR system will ensure that neither party gets an overwhelming majority. In fact, it might become difficult for either to form a government without forming a coalition with one or more of the smaller parties. Therefore politically, the minorities have been put on the map. Minority parties can exploit this situation to fight for and to safeguard the democratic rights of their constituents.

Importance of the minorities

The relationship between the minority races and the Sinhalese has also changed significantly. The Sinhala people in general are now willing to accept the importance of the minorities. Some time ago, when the Ceylon Workers Congress supported the UNP, it was advised not to make public the fact that it was supporting the UNP until the last moment.

'The UNP wanted the CWC on the sidelines until the campaign was almost over. Then, at the last moment, it would allow the CWC to announce that it was supporting the UNP, ensuring that the UNP's rivals could not use the CWC-UNP alliance as propaganda against the UNP. The UNP feared that its alliance with the CWC would make it unpopular with a large section of the Sinhalese, the chauvinists.

'But at the Presidential election campaign, Mr. Premadasa did not hesitate to invite me to his stage at the very beginning of the campaign. I addressed large Sinhala crowds in my broken Sinhala, and they cheered. The UNP drew strength from the fact that the CWC was supporting it' said Mr. Thondaman, leader of the Ceylon Workers Congress.

LINE-UP IN THE SOUTH

The UNP is contesting in all 22 districts in alliance with Thondaman's Ceylon Workers Congress. President Premadasa has ditched 31 MPs from the previous parliament and brought in many new faces in the list of candidates. To take the heat off the opposition to the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement and the presence of the IPKF, New Delhi has already indicated that it is ready to play ball – to substitute an obviously one-sided Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement with a Friendship Treaty containing obligations of mutual reciprocity, and it has already manifested its willingness to undertake a phased withdrawal of the IPKF by pulling out two battalions. Thondaman, whose electoral support assured Pramadasa his Presidency, figures prominantly in the UNP's National list.

The SLFP is contesting in 21 of the 22 districts conceding the Jaffna district to Kumar Ponnampalam's All Ceylon Tamil Congress. It will have the support of the tiny Liberal Partry and the Democratic Workers Congress whose leaders, Chanaka Amaratunga and A. Aziz are included in the SLFP's National List. The SLFP is expected to ditch the Common Programme of the People's Democratic Alliance on the basis of which the SLFP leader contested the Presidential election. Abrogation of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, immediate withdrawal of the IPKF and abolition of the executive presidency are expected to be the main issues on which the SLFP will campaign.

The United Socialist Alliance consisting of the Sri Lanka Mahajana Party, Lanka Sama Samaja Party, Communist Party and the Nava Samaja Party is contesting 17 districts. It is expected to support the TULF-EPRLF-ENDLF-TELO Front in the northern and eastern provinces. The National List of the USA includes Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, I. Duraisingham, A. K. Annamalai, Prof. Osmund Jayaratne, Dr. Kumar David and Dayan Jayatillake.

The Eksath Lanka Janatha Party led by Rukman Senanayake, nephew of the late Dudley Senanayake, is contesting in 15 districts, and in some districts is in alliance with the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress. A breakaway group of the SLFP led by former MP for Gampaha S.D. Bandaranaike is also contesting under the ELJP banner. It is learnt that some known JVP supporters are contesting in ELJP's list.

The Mahajana Eksath Peramuna led by Dinesh Gunawardene, son of the late Philip Gunawardene, is contesting

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in 14 districts excluding the north and east. Attempts to bring about a reconciliation with the SLFP proved futile.

The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress is contesting in 12 districts including north and east. Some SLMC candidates are contesting under ELJP banner and 13 ELJP candidates are being fielded under the SLMC symbol.

NORTH AND EAST

The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) is contesting as a block with the EPRLF, ENDLF and TELO under the TULF name. This Front is fielding 46 candidates for 31 seats – TULF: 17 candidates, EDPRLF; 11 candidates, and TELO and ENDLF 9 candidates each. A. Amirthalingam who was always returned to Parliament from Jaffna district is contesting in the Batticaloa district this time. Former TULF MPs, M.Sivasithamparam, V. Yogeswaran, V. Ananathasangari, Soosaithasan and Sambathan are also contesting.

Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students (EROS) which formed the Eelam Peoples Democratic Front (EPDF) has put up candidates as an independent block as it could not get the EPDF registered as a political party before nominations. EPDF held negotiations with the TULF prior to nominations with a view to reaching an understanding to avoid a contest, but did not succeed. Some known LTTE supporters were included among the nominations submitted by the EROS-led independent block of candidates, but after submitting their nominations, it is learnt that the LTTE supporters have withdrawn their nominations following a directive from the LTTE.

The All Ceylon Tamil Congress is contesting in the Jaffna district being supported by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party.

The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress has fielded candidates in the north and east. Its leader, M.H.M. Ashrof is contesting from the Amparai district. The UNP and SLFP have also put up candidates in the eastern and some districts of the northern provinces.

The political wing of PLOTE led by Uma Maheswaran, the Democratic Peoples Liberation Front (DPLF) is contesting in two districts, Jaffna and Nuwara Eliya. Sitharthan, son of the late V. Dharmalingam, former TULF MP who was killed by Tamil gunmen, is contesting in the Jaffna district under the DPLF.

LTTE TO BAN EROS

The LTTE is the only major Tamil militant group which has not only not fielded candidates, but also has called for a boycott of the elections. The LTTE has denounced the elections as 'unjust, undemocratic, and totally unacceptable. Characterising all those Tamil Groups participating in the elections as 'traitors' who 'have betrayed the Tamil cause for their petty political ambitions', the LTTE statement promises to 'destroy' the traitors.

The LTTE statement added, 'The Tamil nation should resist this fraudulent attempt by the governments of India and Sri Lanka to stage-manage an electoral process under the umbrella of military occupation and repression'.

'To conduct the elections under the conditions of war, violence and anarchy when there is no peace and normalcy in the Tamil homeland is unjust, undemocratic and unacceptable'.

The LTTE which has had fraternal friendly relations with EROS up to now had demanded that the latter withdraws from the elections, failing which the LTTE warned that EROS too would be 'banned' from any activity and dealt with 'accordingly', an EROS spokesman said.

The LTTE's information bulletin relayed over its telephonic-tape has announced that it had already commenced 'military operations' against the 'anti-social elements' and 'traitors' who would be participating in the elections.

TWO BATTALIONS OF IPKF LEAVE

The phased withdrawal of the Indian Peace Keeping Force has already begun. Approximately three thousand troops comprising two battalions of the IPKF have already left Sri Lanka from eastern Trincomalee and northern Kankesanthurai. The second battalion left on 9 January.

An Indian government statement issued both in New Delhi and Colombo said that 'with the successful holding of the provincial council and presidential elections, and the beginning of genuine devolution of powers to the Provincial Government, some of the Indian troops deployed in the North-Eastern Province are in the process of being withdrawn. Some troops have been withdrawn since November end, another two battalions will be withdrawn in the coming few days.'

Explaining the background to the decision, the Indian High Commissioner in Colombo. Mr. J.N. Dixit told a press conference that President Premadasa had made a formal request for the beginning of a phased withdrawal of the India troops when he met him on December 21. The decision was finalised during the meeting between President Jayawardene and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in Islambad.

Mr.Dixit said that the number of Indian troops in Sri Lanka varied between 45,000 and 50,000 but would not give a figure for the number being sent home.

The Indian statement also holds out the possibility of further reductions in the strength of the IPKF, and says that 'as the situation in the North-Eastern Province improves further, as the devolution powers become effective, as the Indo-Sri Lanka agreement gets progressively implemented, as the mischief-making potential of extremist elements opposed to the Agreement is reduced, the Government is hopeful of making further withdrawals in consultation with the Sri Lankan government'.

Mr. Dixit also said that the departure of the troops should also 'set at rest the minds of people who doubt India's goodwill'.

Referring to the concern expressed by the Tamils on fixing July 5 as the date for the referendum before the North-Eastern Provincial Council could continue for one year in power, Mr. Dixit said that he had been assured by the Sri Lankan authorities that there was good interaction between the North-Eastern Provincial Council and the President. The matter would be resolved in a reasonable, practical and amicable manner.

On 19 December 1988, the day of the Presidential election , Army Commander, Lieut. General Hamilton Wanasinghe, in a much publicised interview, said that for some time to come, the IPKF should remain in Sri Lanka because 'we simply do not have the numbers' to tackle the security situation all over the country.

EMERGENCY REVOKED AT LAST

The State of Emergency proclaimed throughout Sri Lanka in May 1983 under the Public Security Ordinance was revoked on 11 January 1989. The country had been under Emergency rule for 2065 days.

Despite the withdrawal of the Emergency, the armed forces will still be deployed under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and Part III of the Public Security Ordinance.

Attorney General, Sunil de Silva, stated that the President could invoke Part III of the Public Security Ordinance under which he had power to deploy the armed forces to assist the police.

The Inspector General of Police, Ernest Perera said that the army officers could be employed as local security force commanders. The members of the security services can make arrests, but will have to turn over the suspects to the police.

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PEOPLE & POLITICS

THE PREMADASA PHENOMENON

by S. Sivanayagam

R. Premadasa

The circumstances under which Mr. Ranasinghe Premadasa scored his Presidential election victory, and the majority with which he won it from a bewildered, half-terrified electorate are perhaps not matters for much exultation, but there is more to it in his elevation to the highest position in the Sri Lankan State than a mere change in the driver's seat. Those who like to believe that Mr. Premadasa's election as President has only brought about a continuity of the prevailing UNP administration (and hence welcome, as many Indian commentators fondly hope) may find many surprises in store as the months go by, provided of course that the new President manages to survive, politically or otherwise.

Firstly, viewed in party terms, Mr. Premadasa is a political curiosity and a paradox. He represents and symbolises a political tendency which does not typify the true character of the party to which he belongs.

At the time it was founded 42 years ago by the man who was to become the country's first Prime Minister, Don Stephen Senanayake, the United National Party was a loosely-knit organisation that brought together the dominant section of the Sinhala upper middle class that had been traditionally pro-British, English-educated, western-oriented and with little or no sympathy for the poor, or the common man's aspirations. The first few years of independence under the UNP saw the country go through a British colonial hangover, with 'Brown Sahibs' replacing the 'White Sahibs' in the seats of authority, and with whatever social or political changes taking place being largely cosmetic.

Party of waist-coats and belted knights

A waist-coat wearing D.S. Senanayake and belted knights like Sir Oliver Goonetilleke and Sir John Kotelawala ruled the roost. Given the manner in which the island became self-governing through constitutional negotiations, unlike India which won her freedom through a political struggle and popular involvement, the UNP may have adequately filled the bill in the early phase in the transition of power; but at no time even during its later years did the party become a representative of the Sinhala heartland.

The UNP remained a party of the upper crust of society, sustaining itself in power with the help of minorities, both ethnic and religious, and externally supported by aid-giving Western countries – the 'Rapacious West' in the celebrated phrase of Mrs. Bandaranaike. That such a party could throw out a Presidential candidate who had sufficient credibility to be accepted as a 'man of the masses' is a strange phenomenon in itself. Mr. Premadasa is in fact the first grass-roots politician to head not only a UNP government, but any Sri Lankan government, barring the minor exception of the homespun W. Dahanayake who held interim power for six months in 1959-60.

With Mr.Premadasa now in total command, it is likely to bring about a radical transformation in the image of the UNP and could even result in a metamorphosis of the party's outlook and political direction. It looks very much a possibility that the new President would go all out to woo the large segment of youth vote which had been denied participation in Parliamentary elections for the past eleven years, and at the same time weed out much of the old dead wood in the party. If he can manage to pull it off, it could not only result in the UNP wearing a new face, but could leave the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and its leader Mrs. Bandaranaike with hardly a leg to stand on.

Caste Factor

The second significant aspect of Mr. Premadasa's ascendancy brings to the fore the caste factor. While all previous seven heads of governments had come from the majority 'Goyigama' caste (the traditional farmers and land owners), Mr. Premadasa hails from the 'Hinna' (washerman) caste which not only ranks fairly low in the pecking order but also has been and is completely inconsequential in public life, unlike the 'Karavas' (the fishing community) and the 'Salagamas' (once described as weavers and later the cinnamon peelers) who have time and again challenged the self-proclaimed superiority of the 'Goyigamas' from colonial times.

Although it could be said that the structure of caste distinctions in Sinhalese society was getting loosened in recent years, partly because of a polarisation on chauvinist lines, they have remained vital when it came to marriages and domestic politics. Until recently, many political observers (including Sinhalese) speculating on the leadership succession within the UNP held serious reservations about Premadas's chances because of the caste factor. An Indian newspaper recently headlined a profile feature on him as 'DHOBIWALLAH TO PRESIDENT'.

For a man with 'slum beginnings' to move into the 'Janadhipathi Mandiralaya' (the President's Palace) once occupied by British governors is in fact more mind-boggling than the America parallel of 'from the log-cabin to the White House'. That this man has belied the prophets and broken the caste barrier, while marking the end of the Goyigama stranglehold on power, should surely bring with it a new political dimension into Sri Lankan politics. For example, will it diminish the high-profile, interventionist political roles of the two leading Mahanayake Theras of the Malwatte and Asgiriya Chapters – the Buddhist High Priests in Sri Lankan politics – to whom a non-Goyigama head of state will be anathema? If it does, it would be a good thing for the Sri Lankan body politic, for at the doors of these two prelates could be placed much of the blame for the on going ethnic strife plaguing the country.

Helpful Attitude

There is a third aspect, again a positive one, that should stand the new President in good stead in the coming years: His comparatively cleaner political behaviour (as distinguished from the political stand) on the ethnic issues. While as a senior Minister he cannot exculpate himself from the collective government guilt of State violence against Tamils, he had kept his hands unsoiled otherwise, which is something that cannot be said for President Jayewardene or some of his other Ministers and party functionaries. Although Mr. Premadasa's name

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too has been associated with thuggery politics, there is at least no evidence to show that it had been turned anytime on Tamils. On the contrary, during the July 1983 bloodbath when Minister Cyril Mathew's fire-eating chauvinist gangs went berserk, and while President Jayewardene and several of his cabinet colleagues sat tight with a smirk on their faces, there were hundreds of Tamils from his Colombo Central constituency who testified to Mr. Premadasa's helpful attitude; particularly the Tamil refugees who were temporarily housed at the Captain's Garden Hindu temple premises in Maradana. Interestingly, Mr. Premadasa has been representing an electorate which has a Tamil-speaking majority, Muslims and Tamils accounting for nearly 64% of the population.

His initiation into office was under Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake when he was inducted as Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Local Government in 1965, the Ministry itself being headed by the Tamil Federal Party nominee Mr.M. Tiruchelvam Q.C. Mr. Premadasa's emergence into office therefore took place under happy circumstances when a Tamil mainstream party was associated in power-sharing at the centre, an experience one suspects has also helped to fashion his less strident outlook on the Tamil question.

A fourth significant factor, which could prove to be Mr. Premadasa's biggest asset in his new role as President is his individial style, both as politician and as a man. Having to battle constantly against his less favoured background and functioning under the shadows of the two dominant contenders for power in Mr. Bandaranaike and Jayewardene since 1970, he had chosen his priorities in public life with circumspection, content with low-profile portfolios such as local government and housing, which while being less glamorous brought him into closer contact with grassroots.

A trilingual President!

In a significant gesture, President Premadasa followed his address in Sinhalese with a short speech in Tamil and then spoke in English, following his swearing-in at the historic Octagon of the Dalad Maligawa (the Temple of the Tooth) in Kandy on January 2.

Come a Long Way

Mr. Premadasa has certainly come a long way, but the way he came – step by step on a long ladder fascinates one; a child rural migrant to Colombo, student social worker, temperance leader, municipal councillor, deputy mayor, member of Parliament, deputy Minister, Minister, Prime Minister, President; and at the age of 64, in contrast to J.R. Jayhewardene who despite ancestry, wealth, and Machiavellian scheming could not get his hands on the levers of power until he was 71. The pursuit of power is something that comes naturally to all politicians, and in a country like Sri Lanka where it has been viciously so, beginning with Bandaranaike in 1955-56 and ending with Jayewardene in 1977-1988, there is something refreshingly different in the way the new President has achieved it. It is logical that this itself should give the stamp to whatever policies he pursues in the future. His almost Sessianic obsession with providing a million houses for the homeless, and in curing rural poverty, and his taking the issue to the international arena by having the year 1987 declared the 'year of shelter for the homeless', his no-nonsense attitude as an achiever, his abiliy to cut through bureaucratic red tape, his capacity to work long hours, and his total disinterest in getting favourable publicity through the international media, are all unusual characteristics, not to be found among the run-of-the-mill Sri Lankan politicians. It is also a point worth recording that during his tenure as Minister some of his most trusted officials were Tamils and his legal affairs were handled by a Tamil lawyer. A devout Buddhist, yes, but he is also devoutly Hindu in worship and outlook. Even his now notorious anti-India stances did not bother him from undertaking a low-key, month-old pilgrimage to Hindu and Buddhist centres of worship in India last year!

Anti-Indian Phobia

That brings us to the fifth aspect, which also has been the widest-publicised stance of Mr. Premadasa on any issue – the Indian government role on the Tamil question. On his vituperative conduct as India-baiter he has remained unashamedly uncompromising. Perhaps all human beings have their blind spots, but when they occur in those who wield governmental power, the results could prove even disastrous. It is not that Mr. Premadasa in his position as his country's Prime Minister had no good reason to be critical of Indian policies. He had. Nor could one say of him that his constant harping on the subject were mere postures which politicians are sometimes compelled to adopt in order to satisfy their constituencies. There was no doubt that he felt very strongly on the subject. But what put off many people was, firstly, his carrying his feelings to excess to the point of a phobia, and secondly, the intemperate language in which he couched them. Here are some snatches of a notable interview given to Indian academic Dr. V.P. Vaidik by Mr. Premadasa in June 1984:–

Q. I was wondering if you really issue anti-India statements or whether the Indian newspapers distort your statements?

A. I just don't care how the Indian newspapers publish my statements. I am too busy to read them. I have no time to spend on them.

Q. You are the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka and in this capacity whatever you speak here has its repercussions in India. So far, your statements have not created any understanding for Sri Lanka in India. They have rather created a lot of misunderstanding.

A. How does it matter to me? How does it matter to Sri Lanka? What is more important is the people of Sri Lanka. They think good of us. We are supposed to serve them and not any foreign power. We are a free country. We are not anybody's slave. We cannot be pressurised. We are not afraid of anybody.

Q. Who is frightening you? Do you have any evidence to prove that the Government of India has ever threatened your government or tried to pressurise your country?

A. What evidence do you want? Giving asylum to these bloody terrorists is a threat to Sri Lanka or not? What would you call it? Tell me, whether these murderers, terrorists are attacking us or not? Who is responsible for encouraging them? . . .

Why does Mrs. Gandhi not let us live in peace. Why is she attacking us from the back door? She wants to use these terrorists as advance guards to attack us? Why does she not occupy Sri Lanka directly? Why does not this government finish us? Our headache also will be removed. We have to govern these poor, unemployed people. She can come here, she can feed everybody. She can make Sri Lanka a colony of India . . .

(V.P. Vaidik: ETHNIC CRISIS IN SRI LANKA: INDIA'S OPTIONS; National Publishing House, 23, Darya Ganj, New Delhi 110002)

In the light of subsequent events, the interview is very revealing. While one must give credit to Dr.Vaidik for being able to draw out Mr. Premadasa into giving vent to his responses in the raw, one cannot at the same time say that Mr. Premadasa was barking up the wrong tree! His 'request' to the Indian government – within 24 hours of his elections as President, (even before he assumed office) – to begin a phased withdrawal of the Indian troops from Sri Lanka, has left India with no **conventional** options on the matter, except to accede to his 'request'. Thereby, he has also made a good beginning by knocking off one of the main planks of the JVP terror campaign. As far as India is concerned, from now on they

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MRS.B. CHALLENGES PREMADASA'S ELECTION

The leader of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party and defeated presidential candidate, Mrs.Sirima Bandaranaike, has challenged in court the election of R. Premadasa, the United National candidate in the presidential election held on December 19.

Mrs. Bandaranaike's lawyers have filed a 38 page petition alleging that the presidential poll was not free and fair and accusing the government of intimidation and the police of stuffing ballot boxes with bogus voting papers.

She also has alleged that the people were afraid to vote for the candidate they preferred, but she did not claim victory for herself. What she has asked the court to do is to declare the election null and void.

Addressing a press conference on 21 December, Mrs. Bandaranaike said that at the previous presidential election, 80% of the registered voters exercised their votes, but in the present election only 55% were able to cast their vote. That was a clear indication that the majority of the people were obstructed from exercising their vote.

Mrs. Bandaranaike had requested the Elections Commissioner to abstain from announcing the results of the

Mrs Bandaranaike

counting until the problems relating to certain polling stations where people could not vote were looked into, but that request was refused. In consequence, she boycotted the announcement of the election results 'as a mark of protest'.

Her allegation before the elections that as many as 1.4 million ballot papers were printed in excess had already been refuted by the Commissioner of Elections in a detailed statement to the press.

At the press conference, Mrs. Bandaranaike also alleged that the police and security personnel pasted UNP propaganda posters during the 48 hour period in which such activity was prohibited. She also produced seven books of ballot papers which she claimed her party supporters had found at a police station to which ballot boxes had been allegedly taken.

She alleged that in 49 polling stations, there were no officers and not a single vote was registered. The Officers kept away following the murder of a presiding officer by 'subversives'. That deprived about 40,000 people of their right to vote.

From page 6

have to do business with a totally different kind of politician, who unlike the unlamented ex-President Jayewardene, has a habit of saying what he means, and meaning what he says; which is also a refreshingly new phenomenon in international dealings.

Achilles' Heel

But while President Premadasa has everything going in his favour right now, his Achilles' heel will turn out to be in his foreign policy approaches. Neither Sri Lanka, nor a future Tamil Eelam for that matter, can ever afford to veer away from the Indian orbit of influence. Whether one likes it or not, the sheer fact of geo-politics will be a deterrent to any such attempt, as the ex-President found to his cost, and the cost of the country. Mr. Premadasa's sentiments in the foregoing interview, such as 'We are a free country. We are not anybody's slave' applies to Tamils as well, who will themselves share the same sentiments in every sense of the world, and in whichever circumstances they are placed. But that is not the same thing as retaining India as one's blind spot and making it as a cornerstone of foreign policy. Six years ago, long before the July '83 rioting, at a time when Indo-Sri Lankan relations were on an even keel, as then Prime Minister, Mr.Premadasa made a futile foray in foreign policy making. He visited the capitals of the five ASEAN countries and canvassed Sri Lanka's admission to the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and not surprisingly met with a rebuff. Apart from it being intrinsically unsound, the persistence with which the application was pursued could not have brought much credit to the Sri Lankan leadership in the eyes of the ASEAN countries.

Recently, on the very day after his party nomination to the Presidency, Mr. Premadasa did a rush trip to Beijing. As for the purpose of the visit, all what an inane media could report was that he had gone to thank the Chinese government in person for the gift of the Supreme court building in Colombo! For a militarily weak, but strategically placed, small country like Sri Lanka to seek diplomatic initiatives to counter-balance an unequal relationship with a large, powerful neighbour (the only near neighbour in fact) is sensible enough. but if the objective is to distance oneself from that neighbour, that would go against both geography and wisdom.

While it would be presumptious to predict at this stage what the future holds for Sri Lanka, the exit of Jayewardene from the centre stage has certainly made a sea change to the power equation in the country. For the first time we see the three hitherto contending forces, the JVP in the south, the LTTE in the north and the Prsident at the centre sharing a common outlook on fundamental issues – the Indo-Sri Lanka accord and the continued presence of the IPKF. Difficult as it may be for all three to get together, given their mutual antagonisms, such a scenario cannot be ruled out, with an unconventional leader like Mr. Premadasa at the helm. Should that happen – improbable things have happened during the past 18 months – Indian policy makers may be compelled to take a second look at their existing attitude towards Prabhakaran and the LTTE. And that probably could be the best thing that could happen to the Tamils; and to India as well, because the longer she persists in controlling the lives of the Tamil people, through gun power and 'puppet shows', the easier it would be for the LTTE to control the minds and hearts of the people.

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An Evaluation of the 1988 presidential election

by Dr. Radhika Cooomaraswamy

It was said to be a classical third world case-study: a government in power for eleven years, weakened by civil war, repressive legislation and creeping economic stagnation.

Moral issues such as deaths in custody, paramilitary killings and the presence of a foreign army seemed paramount. For commentators on our political life, the stage was set for a mass movement, an opposition rallying around a charismatic figure heading toward a landslide, electoral victory. The Philippines constantly figured in the language and the discourse of the opposition. Mrs. Bandaranaike was supposed to resemble an older version of Corozon Aquino leading a combined position to victory.

Most SLFP supporters believed that her charisma and the political moment would combine to bring about what was 'historically inevitable'. But, history again turned tables on Sri Lanka.

Referendum

There is of course: the question as to whether this was a free and fair election. Given the history of the referendum and the provincial councils election there is no doubt that this is a serious concern. However, in both those elections, the SLFP party machinery was not in place. It was hoped that the presence of this countervailing force at the present election would have been an adequate safeguard. And yet, even if all the voters had gone to vote, the SLFP would not have won by a landslide. Mrs. Bandaranaike may have pulled through but only after relying on the preferential votes of Ossie Abeygoonesekere.

How did the SLFP 'clutch defeat from the jaws of inevitable victory?' In retrospect, and with the help of hindsight, an exploration into this question may provide some insights into the on going political process.

Assumptions

One of the primary assumptions of the SLFP campaign was that 'there was a genuine and profound desire for change'. This change they felt required the complete dismantling of the UNP's hold on our public life. This assumption led to an SLFP campaign and manifesto which emphasised moral political concerns. The type of language and discourse used was characteristic of a 'pre-revolutionary' situation. The DPA was going to abrogate the Accord, write a new Constitution, set up commissions of Inquiry, and generally rewrite our political alphabet.

But was the public mood really in accordance with this assessment? In some areas the answer is a definite yes. Those who still continue to believe that there are military solutions to our political problems need only look at the election result to see how heightened military activity lessens political legitimacy, increases desire for change and leads to a general alienation from the national political process.

The Colombo suburbs such as Kaduwela, Kesbewa, etc. which have been constantly subject to prolonged curfew hours, adhoc search and seizure operations, along with Matara and Galle either voted for the SLFP in large numbers or did not vote at all. But in other areas the situations was very different.

Atmosphere

In October/November of this year after the death of Liyanaarachchi and the three medical students, the atmosphere was charged with moral political concerns. But, the hartal of November 10th and its immediate aftermath may have changed public perceptions. There was a growing desire to be apolitical and to be left alone. The draconian emergency regulations enacted after the hartal, received little public protest when only a month earlier thousands demonstrated at the funeral of the brutally massacred students. By December, the desire for 'change' was gradually being replaced by a desire for continuity and stability. The DPA manifesto of 'moral righteousness' may have been released at a time when the public was becoming fearful of the moral crusaders.

Concept

The concept of 'change' must also be analysed more closely. The DPA manifesto was putting forward a programme for constitutional and institutuonal change. In addition, an SLFP victory would have meant a change of personalities and the system of political patronage, drawing in more of the disgruntled sections of society. But, the UNP candidate was also projecting himself as change; a change of social class with a semipopulist political vision. As one commentator remarked, the sense of Ancient Regime does not apply, the Tsar has abdicated in favour of a Narodnik. The SLFP was determined to change the macro-structures of State; Mr. Premadasa concentrated on civil society. Many votes were cast for Premadasa the man, especially in Tissamaharama and Annamaduwa where his programmes have borne fruit.

Factor

One major factor which may have contributed to the electoral defeat of the SLFP was ideological incoherence on the major political issue – the ethnic conflict. After all, the SLFP was galvanised into political action after years of lethargy because of the Indo-Lanka Accord. The SLFP led the legal protests against the thirteenth amendment before the Supreme Court by arguing that devolution was tantamount to dividing the country, that Buddhist shrines in the North and East were not safe etc . . . By December 1988, the DPA was offering a political package to resolve the ethnic conflict involving 'ethnic regions' without much reference to Buddhist shrines, let alone Sinhala Buddhists. Many of us may welcome the SLFP's open and unequivocal committment to their concept of devolution and there are many strengths in some of the proposals put forward. But, coming at the last moment they would have confused the Sinhala Buddhist electorate and the much publicised non-deal

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RESULTS

Registered voters	:	9,375,742	
Total Polled	:	5,186,223	(55.32%)
Valid votes	:	5,094,778	
Rejected votes	:	91,445	(1.76%)
R. Premadasa, UNP	:	2,569,190	(50.43%)
Mrs.S.Bandaranaike, SLFP	:	2,289,860	(44.95%)
O.Abeygunasekera, SLMP	:	235,719	(4.63%)
Majority	:	279,339	

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with the LTTE may have discouragd many SLFP voters from braving threats to exercise their votes in the traditional areas.

Risk

The risk taken by the SLFP may have been an interesting political gamble if the Tamil voters of the North and East turned out in large numbers. But, as one observer in the North commented that while the Sinhala voter in Matara and Galle may not have voted because of intimidation, the northern voters approached the elections with 'monumental disinterest'. The disinterest was patently obvious from the nomination to polling day. The East however provided a different picture. While the Jaffna peninsula continues to sulk at the state of political affairs, the provincial council elections in the east had set in motion an alternative, albeit, fragile political and civil process. The DPA manifesto demanding the abrogation of the Accord was not well received by the Batticola Tamils who have begun to experience a period of relative calm in the last few months. As for the Sinhalese their verdict was even more unusual. Digamadulla (Amparai district) had an exceptional voter turnout of 72.89% and the UNP received 50.77% of the vote. In the provincial elections held last month none of the Sinhala voters in Amparai seemed interested in participating.

Lost

In Trincomalee though the UNP lost Seruwila by a few hundred votes, they took the district. As for the Muslims, their votes in Kalmunai, Samanthurai and Mutur appear to have gone to the UNP. Their vote in the East can be characterised as 'Ashroof's revenge'.

The UNP sweep of the East was quite extraordinary given the fact that it was for the candidate of the political party which to the temporary merger of the North and the East greatly alienating Sinhala and Muslim sentiment, and the candidate of the political party which had unleashed the STF on the Tamils of the area until over a year ago. The SLFP was denied victory in the East because it put forward a political programme without appreciating the recent changes in the political process in these areas. As an addendum it should be pointed out that Wellawatte voted overwhelmingly for Mr. Premadasa and gave him double the votes. The desire for stability had obviously overcome the anger and hatred generated by the 1983 riots.

Affected

Other factors of importance which may have affected the final electoral result, are what may be termed 'bread and butter' issues. The DPA programme was singularly uninterested in these issues even though the SLFP had to overcome a legacy of scarcities and shortages. There was no extra effort to give confidence to the voter. The mere presence of Mr. Ronnie de Mel in the opposition ranks may have not been enough. A concerted effort to ease people's fears may have brought more dividends than a one-upmanship poster campaign of prices then and now.

QUOTE . . . UNQUOTE

"How otherwise could a candidate from a party (Premadasa of the UNP) accused locally and internationally of 'massacring Tamils' win so many votes from that community? Unless of course one accepts the Ponnampalam proposition that the more you beat the Tamils, the more they vote for you which also goes for some wives, I am told. The Ponnampalam proposition, I fear, holds good (it has been my own long held belief) for Colombo 7 Tamils whose permanent posture of humble homage to the UNP changed when the 'Tigers' gifted them a spinal chord. It is this reliance on a vicarious virility that makes upper-class Tamils, from Colombo to Columbia university, from Cambridge, Massachusettes to Cambridge university, and New South Wales to New Brunswick, keep alive the mystique of the 'Tigers'".

– Kautiliya, Sunday Island, 1.1.89

Strength

To have won the elctions, the SLFP had to bring out its voters in full strength in the face of threats and intimidation. At the same time it had to be vigilant against the arbitrary use of state power. And yet this led to contradictory political tendencies. The more one exposes the failings of the democratic process, the less confidence voters would have to come out and exercise their votes. If the SLFP did believe that a high voter turn-out was crucial for their election then it may have been more fruitful to have minimised the 'anti-electoral process' rhetoric and maximised their organisational ability to get out the voters. The task may have been awesome in the face of JVP and paramilitary violence. It could have only been accomplished with a powerful party machine and a strong party organisation. In that sense a leaf has to be taken out of the LSSP of the 1940's, the UNP of the 1970's and the JVP of the 1980's. The UNP's victory is greatly due to their party organisation and discipline. Without the full weight of a modern party apparatus elections cannot easily be won . The charisma of personalities is no longer enough.

In the final analysis it has to be said that the JVP may have actually lost the elections for Mrs. Bandaranaike. Its activities led not only to the lower voter turnout but to a change in the public mood, a resistance to drastic change. During the period of co-operation between the two parties, the JVP obviously felt that it was the stronger organisational partner. The JVP has successfully hijacked social discontent away from the traditional political parties. They were confident and determined to call all the political shots. One must concede that they did in fact succeed. They paved the way for the demands of the alliance. What appeared in a JVP underground document in June would appear in an Alliance statement in August. After November and the parting of the ways of the two parties, the very important question remains – who truly represents the forces of social discontent coming out of 11 years of UNP rule, is the SLFP or is it the JVP? The election results clearly indicate that in some areas such as Gampaha, the JVP is no match for the SLFP, but in other areas especially in the South and North Central Province, the question remains open. The answer to this question will affect opposition politics for years to come.

Final

Which leads me to my final comment. What is most troublesome about the election results is that it shows a terrible alienation on the part of the low country Sinhala Buddhists living in the rural areas to the deep South and the North Central Province. In the late 1970's and the 1980's, the minorities felt this alienation most, their youths taking up arms against the state. Today, politics has come a full circle. It is the heartland of Anagarika Dharmapala and Munidasa Cumaratunga which is acutely disturbed. Unless this is perceived as a national problem requiring national solutions and unless immediate steps are taken to redress the political, economic and social grievances of these areas, nothing else we do is likely to succeed.

AN APPEAL

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Jaffna has set up a welfare Fund to assist university students, who receive neither bursary nor scholarship and those under dire distress due to unforseen circumstances.

The assistance will include the provision of financial aid in times of emergency and other activities of social welfare as may be decided upon by the Board of Management in consultation with the University Council in order to maintain high quality and good standard in the field of student welfare.

Donations are invited from past students, public, well wishers, associations and individuals. Money orders and cheques may be drawn in favour of University of Jaffna Vice Chancellor's Welfare Fund or may be sent direct to the fund's current account. No 10496 maintained at the Bank of Ceylon, Stanley Road Branch, Jaffna.

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AN END TO 'STATELESSNESS'

Minister S. Thondaman must be congratulated for persuading the Government to adopt the new law to end statelessness. It was passed in Parliament on November 9th. By its provisions Sri Lanka citizenship is conferred on all stateless persons of Indian Origin (still resident in the country) and who are not in the list of 506,000 persons who have been granted Indian Citizenship.

At all times, Mr. Thondaman has emphasised that persons described as 'Tamils of recent Indian Origin' could not be regarded as 'stateless' because they were human beings who had made this country their home and were entitled to enjoy the same rights enjoyed by others. He has also always maintained that any measure to end statelessness was due to the unity and solidarity of plantation workers.

Nevertheless, I would like to stress that the law adopted on November 9 is a personal triumph for Mr. Thondaman. Though there are several Trade Unions in the plantations it is Mr. Thondaman of the CWC who has consistently and persistently taken up the question of citizenship for Tamils of Indian Origin as one of the human rights to which plantation workers in particular were entitled.

It is necessary to recall that in the past, various attempts were made to solve the problem of statelessness of plantation Tamils. Over the years, various Agreements have been signed with India and several laws have been adopted in Parliament. Hopes had been raised that the problem could be solved. But in fact it was not. At all times something remained to be done for those Tamils of Indian Origin who had opted for Sri Lankan Citizenship.

BY V. THEVARAJ

In January 1986, the Law(No.5) to Grant Citizenship to Stateless Persons of Indian Origin was enacted to end statelessness within 18 months. The 1964 Sirima-Sastri Agreement was drawn up to end statelessness in 1964, and it was agreed that statelessness would end in 15 years. To make this possible several lakhs were repatriated (under the agreement) to India. The fifteen years ended in 1979. The 18 months of the 1986 Act ended in mid 1987. And still there were several lakhs of stateless – all of them eligible to be citizens.

Hence the need for the new law of 1988. It had also become necessary because experience has shown that governmental indifference (wilful and otherwise), administrative red tape, neglect and default have flawed implementation of the Indian and Pakistani (Residents) Act of 1949 and all other laws adopted subsequently to grant citizenship to Indian Tamils.

I would like to cite one instance of such default. The names of 2,079 Tamils of recent Indian origin, accepted for registration as citizens on the 25th April 1976, were published in the Gazette – and only after such notification in the Gazette is their citizenship valid for practical purposes.

It is significant that none of the other National Parties have put forward any concrete proposals to end statelessness. The All-Party Conference in 1984/85 adopted a pious resolution to end statelessness. It has remained a dead letter. Mr. Thondaman, however was able to push the UNP into action on this matter, first in 1986 and now in 1988.

The SLFP which opposed the 1986 Act has now been silent. But at recent presidential election meetings hints have been dropped by Mrs Bandaranaike and her son Anura that the problems of the plantation workers and their statelessness would be solved if SLFP came to power. At a meeting in Matugama to celebrate the birthday of Mr. Aziz, Mr. Anil Munasinghe said that if the SLFP came to power'. . . we will not compulsorily repatriate Tamils of recent Indian origin. The Party will also solve the problem of the plantation workers. . . . .This is not a mere election promise. . . . . '

But people cannot forget that it was during SLFP regimes that plantation workers had to face violence, particularly during Land Reform in 1973/76 and also suffer compulsory repatriation. All this cannot be forgotten. It would appear that the SLFP is now putting forward a 'moderate' view in the question of the plantation workers. But it has not yet spelt out its policies on the question of the stateless and the Tamil minority in any specific way.

The UNP was resposible for the deprivation of the citizenship from the Indian Tamils in 1948. At that time all those who formed the SLFP in 1952 were in the UNP. It is the UNP which passed the legislation in 1986 and now in 1988 to end statelessness. But the credit must go to Mr Thondaman for persuading (and at times even pressurising) the UNP into taking action to end statelessness.

LSSP ON 'JVP TERRORISM'

"At the time the Presidential election was announced, the LSSP made public its view that the conditions did not exist for a free and fair election. The LSSP made it clear that this situation prevailed because of the activities of the JVP-DJV and that these disruptive forces were free to continue with their terrorist activities because responsible political parties failed to create public opinion against such activities. Major political parties were competing with each other to win support and collaboration of these forces," said a statement issued by the Lanka Sama Samaja Party after the Presidential election.

The statement added that when opposition forces failed to unite against terrorism and for the restoration of democratic conditions, it was not surprising that terrorism found itself free to attack election meetings, decide which meeting it would permit, kill supporters of the contesting candidates and to intimidate voters and polling staff. There was no doubt that voters in several areas were intimidatd by terrorists and the election machinery disrupted.

"It is clear that the forthcoming parliamentary elections will be subject to the same disabilities if this menace of terrorism is not eliminated before the commencement of the election process," the statement said.

While calling upon the government to ensure that the necessary conditions are established for the democratic process to operate unhindered by terrorism, the LSSP urged "all opposition parties and in particular the Sri Lanka Freedom Party to disassociate themselves from the JVP-DJV and unequivocally condemn terrorism in all its forms."

CONGRATULATIONS

The following telex, dated November 11 was received by Hon. S. Thondaman, President of the Ceylon Workers Congress and Minister of Rural Industrial Development, from Mr. Mathur, General Secretary APRO – ICFTU.

Delighted to learn Sri Lankan Parliament passed bill granting citizenship to all 'stateless' persons of Indian Origin, benefitting over 260,000 persons. Please accept our heartiest congratulations on this resounding victory for you and Ceylon Workers Congress who have been relentlessly fighting for the last four decades for citizenship rights for the so called 'stateless persons'. This removes one of the injustices meted out to these people and we hope now as equal citizens of the country they will be able to have a peaceful life while making their contribution to the Development of the country. The ICFTU and APRO have been consistently supporting the CWC in its heroic struggle. You can count on our fullest co-operation and continued support in your efforts to improve the working conditions of your members.

Wishing you continued success and heartiest greetings.

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NORTH-EAST PROVINCIAL GOVT. UNVEILS PROGRAMME OF ACTION

The newly elected North-East provincial government's policies and programme of action were unveiled in the form of the Governor's policy statement delivered on 16 December 1988.

The following are some of the major subjects referred to in the policy statement:

★ MAJOR TASK: The major task facing the Provincial government was the restoration of peace, public order and civil administration; the task of resettlement, rehabilitation and reconstruction is mammoth, but it would endeavour to achieve this task to everybody's satisfaction.

★ BASIC POLICY: The basic policy of the provincial government is the establishment of a democratic society and the fundamentals of socialist-oriented social development. This goal will be achieved by striving for peace, democracy, unity and reconciliation. Rehabilitation of the affected people, recontruction of the affected areas, eradication of poverty and unemployment, provision of lands for the landless and providing security for every resident will be the ultimate aim.

★ LAW AND ORDER : A provincial police force will be established; as an immediate measure, a Citizen Volunteer Force of about 7000 will be created; already about 1500 have been recruited. Discussions will take place with the central government to remove ethnic imbalances in the armed forces and the National Police Force. The judicial machinery which had collapsed will be restored and early steps will be taken to establish a High Court in Trincomalee.

★ REHABILITATION : Urgent and immediate attention will be given to rehabilitation. A special Committee to plan, implement and monitor a Programme of Rehabilitation to be drawn up in consultation with representatives of the people and Non-Governmental Organisations will be set up. NGO's will be encouraged to take part in rehabilitation in keeping with the agreed Programme. Special attention will be given to re-settlement of displaced persons, provision of housing and other social welfare needs, creation of income generation schemes, rehabilitation of widows, orphans, disabled and other affected youth and the restoration of social and economic infrastructure.

★ FOOD AND CO-OPERATIVES: Fair price stalls and co-operative outlets will be set up in towns and villages. A Provincial Food Authority will be created to handle collection, storage, processing and distributuion of grains and essential food items.

★ HOUSING AND WATER SUPPLY: Top priority will be given for a house-building programme. While free housing will be provided to the very poor, other house-builders will be given incentives including soft-loans. New water supply schemes in needy areas will be created.

★ HEALTH : Equal importance will be given for both preventive and curative aspects of health. Primary Health Centres in remote villages will be established. The Trincomalee Hospital will be modernised and upgraded. Other neglected hospitals will be improved.

★ EDUCATION : Urgent attention will be paid to rectify the damage caused to the educational infrastructure, lack of adequate number of trained teachers, school buildings, and other facilities in schools. Steps will be taken to improve the quality of English-teaching in all schools. A University in Tricomalee will be established with special emphasis for the teaching of Engineering, Architecture, Law, Linguistics, Public Administration and other disciplines not available in existing Universities in the Province.

★ LAND ADMINISTRATION: The subject of land has been the most sensitive issue between the people of the province and the central government. Negotiations will commence with the central government to resolve this issue. Poverty and caste oppression resulting from landlessness will be tackled.

★ AGRICULTURE: Steps will be taken to assist tenant farmers and to provide improved irrigation facilities. A special body will be set up to co-ordinate the agricultural activities within the province. Diversification of crops will be encouraged. Export markets for agricultural products will be found in order to raise the income levels of farmers. Resources will be provided for improving animal husbandry.

★ FISHERIES: The development of marine and inland fisheries and aquaculture will be given priority. Efforts will be made to remove existing difficulties in the procuring of crafts and fishing gear, processing, storage and marketing of marine products. Priority will be given to the setting up of fisheries-based industries.

★ INDUSTRIES : Steps will be taken, in consultation with the central government, to re-organise and expand the Chemical, Paper, Ilmenite, Ceramic, Sugar and Cement industries already functioning in the province. Exploration and other scientific studies will be undertaken concerning the mineral resources available with a view to establishing new industries. Small industries and handicrafts will be encouraged and assisted. Agro-industries based on palmyrah and coconut palms, tobacco, sun flower, soya bean, ground nut, sugar cane, gingelley etc. will be given priority. Steps will be taken to prevent ecological imbalances and enviromental pollution resulting from industrial development.

★ POWER AND ENERGY : A thermal power station of the required capacity will be set up. Studies on solar energy, bio gas and wind energy will be undertaken. The central government will be persuaded to re-commence off-shore oil exploration in the region of the Gulf of Mannar.

★ IRRIGATION : Restoration of village tanks and construction of medium and major tanks will be given priority in the development programme. Negotiations with the central government will be undertaken on the subject of inter-provincial rivers. Mutual consultation between the provincial and central governments will be insisted upon in respect of inter-provincial irrigation schemes.

★ TRANSPORTATION : All necessary steps will be taken to improve the road-passenger transport systems. Private bus transport services will be controlled to give a fair deal to the commuter. Ferries in disuse will be recommissioned. Highest priority will be given to the construction of a highway from Kankesanturai to Pottuwil via Pooneryn, Paranthan, Mullaitivu, Trincomalee, Verugal and Kalmunai. Roads presently in a neglected state will be improved. The subject of constructing new railway lines within the province linking up existing routes will be discussed with the central government.

★ MUSLIM AFFAIRS : The Provincial government will take all possible steps to protect and maintain the identity of the Muslims. Their cultural traditions and religious needs will be considered at the highest possible levels and necessary steps will be taken to fulfill them. The study of Islamic Theology for social liberation will be introduced and fostered in close co-operation with competent Theologians in keeping with current national and international perspectives and realities. Steps also will be taken to recover and return the lands lost by the Muslims.

★ SINHALESE MINORITY : The Provincial government has a moral committment to convince the Sinhalese people of the Province that the administration is not based on race, religion or language, but on secularism and social progress. Negotiations will be commenced with leaders of the local

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Sinhalese community on all issues that relate to the historical cordial relationship between the Tamils and the Sinhalese. It is the wish of the Provincial government to uphold the principle of equality in administration, especially in land alienation, law and order, education and culture. Steps will be taken to re-settle and rehabilitate the affected Sinhalese who had traditionally lived in the province in places of their choice. Care will be taken to see that attempts made to upset the historical ethnic fabric, in the name of chauvinism of different hues, will be kept under check.

★ TAMIL LANGUAGE : Tamil language has now become an official language along with the Sinhala language of the whole country. Action will be taken to give the Tamil language its rightful place in the administration. Facilities will be provided to undertake research pertaining to the Tamil language in collaboration with the government of Tamil Nadu.

★ DEVOLUTION OF POWERS : The devolved powers offered under the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution hardly satisfy the aspirations of the Tamil speaking people of the Province. Negotiations will be commenced with the central government and the government of India with a view to working out a satisfactory package of devolution.

"IT IS SUICIDAL FOR TAMILS TO BE DIVIDED"

– TULF LEADER

The following is an interview with Mr. A. Amirthalingam, the Secretary General of the Tamil United Liberation Front – TULF (Sunday Times, 15.1.89):

Q: In 1983, you exiled yourself from Parliament because the oath you were required to take under the sixth amendment to the constitution was not compatible with the mandate you had been given, to set up a separate Tamil state. But you took the oath last week. Why?

A: After 1983, at the all party conference we redefined our stand in the light of the stand of the government of India. We stated at the all party conference that though we were elected on a mandate to work for an independent state, if the government of Sri Lanka offered a satisfactory alternative which will satisfy the aspirations of the Tamil people and remove the grievances that gave rise to the demand for a separate state, we were prepared to place it before the people and implement it with their approval. We said this in 1984. Then in 1985 at the Thimpu conference where six Tamil groups, namely the EPRLF, EROS, LTTE, PLOTE, TELO, and the TULF participated on behalf of the Tamil people, the six groups jointly put forward four basic principles as the basis for a political solution to the Tamil problem. These were:

1. Recognition of Tamils as a separate nation.
2. Recognition of the traditional Tamil homeland and the preservation of its unity and integrity.
3. Recognition of the right of self determination of the Tamil nation.
4. Recognition of the right to citizenship of all Tamils who have made this country their home.

It is keeping these four principles in mind that the Indo-Sri Lanka accord recognised that Sri Lanka was a multi ethnic, multi lingual society consisting of Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers and that each ethnic group has a distinct cultural and linguistic identy which had to be carefully nurtured, and also recognised that the northern and eastern provinces have been areas of historic habitation of Tamil speaking people, and also provided for the merger of the northern and eastern provinces with one administrative unit, one provincial council.

In fact, action has since been taken to create this one provincial council and to hold elections to it, pass constitutional amendments making Tamil an official language, and grant citizenship rights to the plantation Tamil community. It will thus be seen that meaningful steps have been taken towards meeting the four principles at least partially. It is in this context that not only the TULF but the other Tamil militant groups like the EPRLF, EROS, TELO, ENDLF and some others have taken the oath under the seventh schedule in order to contest the Parliamentary elections.

Q: But has the concept of a separate state as envisaged by you in 1977 been met?

A: The four basic principles do not necessarily mean a separate state, or support for the establishment of a separate state.

Q: But the first of the four principles sought recognition of a separate Tamil nation, and this was not compatible with the sixth amendment.

A: A separate nation, not a separate state. The four principles are not necessarily incompatible with the oath under the sixth amendment.

Q: So are you saying that since these four conditions have been met, a

Continued on Page 17

Mysterious Photograph?

For the past one month there has been hardly any reference to LTTE leader, V. Prabhakaran, in the Indian media. Suddenly, on January 1, New Year's day, THE HINDU published this photograph in its news columns, for no obvious particular reason, and with no accompanying news item, with the following caption

THE LTTE LEADER, MR.V. PRABHAKARAN (LEFT) WITH HIS DEPUTY, MR. MAHATHIYA, AND AN LTTE ACTIVIST, MR. SHANKER, SOMEWHERE IN THE NORTHERN JUNGLE IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE OF SRI LANKA IN LATE – 1988

Picture by special arrangement.

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IPKF MEN FACE COURT MARTIAL

Charges include murder, rape, loot

by Kanwar Sandhu

A number of Indian soldiers face dismissal from military service besides rigorous imprisonment for commiting excesses, including raping of women and looting of civilian property while deployed for peace-keeping role in Sri Lanka, it is learnt.

So far, the government had denied that the IPKF soldiers had committed any excesses. The denials came in the wake of allegations by human rights organisations, including Amnesty International, a few months ago. The instances were kept under wraps by the army authorities who, however, did initiate punitive action against the guilty. But legal experts feel that the manner in which the army has handled the whole issue raises vital points of law which may not stand the scrutiny of Indian law courts later.

The most serious case relates to an incident which occured on November 21, 1987 near Trincomalee when Naik Baldev Singh of the 270 Engineers' Regiment ran beserk and killed seven civilians and injured another four by indiscriminate firing from his service rifle. He committed this crime following the death of his brother-in -law during a combat operation the previous day.

The army authorities propose to try him by General Courts Martial (GCM) in Sri Lanka under section 69 of the Army Act (civil offence) contrary to sections 302 and 307 of the Indian Penal Code. This is the first time in recent years that a trial of this nature under sections of the Indian Penal Code will take place in a foreign country.

Section 124 of the Army Act provides that, 'Any person subject to this Act who commits any offence may be tried and punished for such offence in any place whatever'. Even the Indian Penal Code provides for punishments to Indians for offences committed beyond the limits of India. But the vital point of law is whether a trial by the IPC for civil offences committed abroad against nationals of that country can be held out of Indian soil.

Legal experts say that while a trial for a purely military offence can be held anywhere, a trial for a civil offence under the IPC could be held only in India unless it was specifically agreed by the countries concerned and the agreement has been duly ratified by the respective parliaments.

Army officers of the judge advocate general's branch feel that if the trial was held in India, Sri Lankan civilians would not be able to depose as witnesses. A senior lawyer said that the IPC provides for extradition and the trial could be held in Sri Lanka according to the laws of that country. Army authorities are, however, not keen to follow this course as stringent punishment by a Sri Lankan court to asuage local sentiments could demoralise Indian troops deployed there.

Several soldiers face dismissal on charges of rape, sodomy and looting of civilian property for which the Army Act along with the provisions of the IPC provides severe punishment. In fact, they also face action for violating the regimental orders passed recently which directed army personnel to abstain from frisking women without the presence of women personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force (Mahila CRPF).

Almost all cases of rape and looting are being tried by Summary Courts Martial (SCM), which is conducted by the concerned commanding officers. The trials are held under section 69 of the Army Act contrary to sections 375 and 376 of the IPC.

However, lawyers point out that the soldiers guilty of such crimes should have been tried by GCM which after deliberation could sentence the accused to long terms of imprisonment and even life imprisonment.

They point out that since section 376 of the IPC provides for sentences up to 10 years for rape, etc. the trials could not be held by SCM which is empowered to sentence the guilty to only one years imprisonment, besides dismissal from service. In many cases the sentences of SCM's have been reduced considerably following appeals to senior officers.

Sources said that two soldiers, Latur Lal and Babu Lal of 12 Grenadiers, face a year's imprisonment and dismissal from service for allegedly raping a married woman at Karavedi during Operation Pawan on May 27, 1988. The incident was reported by the vice principal of Varani Mahavidalaya and the army authorities decided to take immediate cognizance as the local people who had gathered started condemning the entire IPKF.

Another soldier of 12 Grenadiers – Khem Raj Meena – faces dismissal and four month's imprisonment for attempting to rape another married woman when the unit was conducting cordon and search of a house at Thunnalai south (Point Pedro, Jaffna) on February 1, 1988.

Sepoy Karnail Singh of 14 Sikh Light Infantry faces dismissal and one year's RI for allegedly raping a woman of village Idaikkurichy during a search on December 17, 1987. Similar punishment is also being given to A. Mani, the barber of 93 Field Regiment for allegedly raping an unmarried woman of a place near Kodikaman on December 24, 1987 when conducting a search operation. He has also been tried for stealing two wrist watches. Similarly, Naik Kulwant Singh of 16 Sikh has been sentenced to nine months' imprisonment and faces dismissal for committing theft of gold ornaments from a house in village Mandaitvu near Jaffna on January 13, 1988.

Highly placed sources said there were numerous complaints from different agencies, including RAW, of excesses by Sikh troops. However, inquiries later did not substantiate many of these allegations.

Six jawans, including A. Havildar of 5 Rajputana Rifles face dismissal and one year's RI for disobeying regimental orders and indulging in sexual relations with women while frisking them at Visuvamadu village on April 11, 1988. These six, whose involvement was also proved by a staff inquiry, are Havildar Mewa Singh, Naik Subhash Chander, Suresh Kumar and riflemen Harvair Singh, Ramphool Singh and Bhagirath Ram. The incident occured during operation Viraat. However, the court of inquiry brought out that the four complainants were women of easy virtue and their main grouse was that they were not paid for their services.

Nail Banwari Lal and rifleman Gugan Ram of 18 Garhwal Rifles, too, face dismissal and six months' imprisonment each for trying to outrage the modesty of married women at Kaithadi on December 25, 1987.

The Army authorities were very embarrassed by the behaviour of Havildar Badan Singh posted in an infantry brigade headquarters who in January-February, 1988 committed sodomy against four male activists of the LTTE during their detention at Jaffna fort.

There have also been allegations of some LTTE activists dying in army custody.

Lance Naik SK Bose of 146 Air Defence Regiment has been dismissed and given four months' imprisonment for picking up electronic goods and other civilian items in November 1987 while on duty between Palaly air field and Jaffna. In fact, his commanding officer recommended deterrent punishment as such actions were bound to 'tarnish the image of the army and the IPKF and earn ill-will of the local populace.'

Sources said that about one dozen similar instances had also been reported against troops of other battalions of Kumaon, Mahar and Madras regiments. But details are not yet available.

Courtesy of THE SUNDAY OBSERVER, Bombay, 18-24.12.88

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SLFP ON THE RETREAT ON ETHNIC ISSUE

The Sri Lanka Freedom Party leader, Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike, who was the defeated presidential candidate of the opposition Democratic Peoples Alliance, issued a press statement on 16 December 1988, just three days before the election, purportedly correcting what she described as 'false and misleading statements about the common programme of the Democratic Peoples Alliance on the ethnic question'.

The common programme (see Tamil Times, December 1988) was subjected to severe criticism by extremist Sinhala chauvinist sections including some Buddhist priests who began to malign Mrs. Bandaranaike as a traitor.

In response, Mrs. Bandaranaike issued the following statement:

"A large number of false and misleading statements about the common programme of the Democratic People's Alliance on the ethnic question made in the recent past by several 'dignitaries' of the UNP have received wide publicity in the Press and cannot be allowed to go without comment.

"They have alleged, inter-alia, that our Common Programme paves the way for:
(a) the erosion of our sovereignty;
(b) the devolution of more powers than those devolved under the so-called Indo-Lanka Accord:
(c)the permanent merger of the North and the East:and
(d) a halt to all colonisation.

"Nothing could be further from the truth.

"As regards (a) above, it must be observed that the Indo-Lanka Accord specifically provides for the continued dominance over and interference in our internal affairs by the Indian Government in perpetuity.

"Our common programme on the other hand, provides for the abrogation of the Accord and the sending back of all Indian troops, thereby bringing to an end every vestige of Indian dominance over an interference in our internal affairs. Our programme will, therefore, re-establish our sovereignty which the present government has bartered away.

"As regards (b) above, a comparison of the list of powers reserved for the centre in terms of the Accord and the 13th Amendment with the list of powers reserved for the centre in terms of our programme will show quite clearly that this allegation is false. The critics of our programme have conveniently omitted to take note inter alia, in terms of the Accord and the 13th Amendment that each provincial council would have a locally recruited provincial police division under its direction and control .In terms of our programme, there would only be one police force recruited by the central government for the entire country.

"As regards (c) above, our programme provides for two regional legislative bodies in the North and East. It is self-evident that there can be no merger when there are two such bodies. It must also be noted in this regard that it is false to state that the Accord and the 13th Amendment provide only for a temporary merger.

"In terms of the Accord the East would only be delinked if the people of the East decide to separate from the North at a referendum. If the decision at the referendum of 1982 was held and the manner in which the recent provincial council elections were held in the East while thousands of refugees had not then returned to their homes and with unprecedented thuggery and intimidation leave no room for any hope that such a referendum would be fairly held, or that it would result in a delinking of the North and the East.

"This is particularly so when one considers the fact that the referendum would be held in the North and East at a time when a foreign army is on our soil.

"As regards (d) above, our programme does not provide for a 'halt' to colonisation, but for a temporary 'freeze' on colonisation 'until an acceptable principle of land allocations is put into effect'. In any event there is no on-going colonisation today. On the contrary even those colonists who have lived in the North and East for many years are being forced to flee their land."

POLICE OFFICERS CHARGED WITH LAWYER'S KILLING

Superintendent of Police K. Dharmadasa, Sub-Inspector of Police Mendis and Police Constable Dassanayake have been indicted by the Sri Lankan Attorney General Suni De Silva in connection with the death in police custody of Wijedasa Liyanarachchi, an Attorney-at-Law.

Liyanarachchi was kidnapped on August 25 last year by police officers as he came out of a court at Hulftsdorp in Colombo and taken to the Tangalle police station and kept in detention at the Sub-Inspector's residence. The police kept the lawyer's detention a secret. His sudden disappearance caused anguish among his lawyer friends who made frantic representations to the Inspector General of Police, the Defence Secretary and the Minister of Defence.

Liyanarchchi was known as a lawyer who appeared in many habeas corpus applications before courts for the release of detainees, particularly from the south of the island and therefore his friends suspected that he would have been a probable target for the security forces.

Having initially denied the arrest, following persistent representations, Liyanarachchi was transferred to an army camp in Colombo on September 2. Within a few hours of his transfer, he had to be admitted to hospital with severe injuries where he died. The post-mortem examination revealed as many as 111 external and internal injuries, which according to the Judicial Medical Oficer who testified had been caused within the previous five to six days.

Following his death, the Bar Association adopted a resolution that none of its members would appear on behalf of police officers. At the subsequent Judicial inquest held by the High Court in Colombo, the police officers involved in the kidnapping and detention of Liyanarachchi refused to answer questions on the grounds that they were unable to obtain legal representation on their own behalf in consequence of the 'boycott' by lawyers.

On receipt of the Inquest proceedings from the High Court, as is customary, the Attorney General directed the Inspector General of Police to institute non-summary proceedings against named police officers.

The Attorney General, Sunil de Silva, in a statement said that he had two options with regard to the prosecution of suspects. These were, to instruct the IGP to institute non-summary proceedings against the suspects or to indict them himself. Since the IGP had failed to comply with his directive to institute non-summary proceedings, he was compelled to exercise the only option he had, that is to file indictments against the suspect police officers, said the Attorney General.

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From page 13

separate state is no longer necessary?

A: No. I wouldn't put it like that.

Q: How do you think the fact that you have taken the oath to uphold Sri Lanka's unitary status will affect your votes?

A: Every candidate has taken the same oath. We are all in the same boat. So how can it affect our votes? We will let the people give their reply. I think the very idea of unity at this crucial juncture is bound to influence the vote of the Tamil people. Particularly, Tamil unity is an absolute necessity in the eastern province. That was one of the main factors that weighed with us in trying to forge the maximum possible unity. It is unfortunate that some groups could not fall in line and are contesting as independent groups or separate groups even in areas like Trincomalee. It will be suicidal for the Tamil people to be divided in areas like Trincomalee or Amparai.

Q: Why?

A: Because there is such a delicate balance among the communities and Tamil representation may be seriously affected by division in their vote.

Q: Which groups are you talking about? Are you referring to the Tamil Congress?

A: In fact, one reason why I yielded to pressure from my surpporters to contest Batticaloa was that the sword of Democles of the Referendum which is hanging over the head of the merged north-east province has to be removed by a determined effort on the part of the Tamil people in the next Parliament. I feel confident that my victory in Batticaloa will be an indication of the determination of the Tamil people to preserve the unity and integrity of their homeland in the north-eastern province.

Q: So will you promise the Tamil people that you will oppose the Referendum?

A: If under the present circustances you try to hold a Referendum you will create new turmoil and conflict even before things settle down. At any rate the Referendum cannot be held on July 5. It has to be put off indefinitely. Of course, we also feel that steps to legally satisfy the aspirations of the Muslims in the eastern province have to be taken. The TULF is committed to ensuring that statutory provision is made for the Muslims to share power with the Tamils in the north-eastern provincial council.

Q: What about the Sinhalese? You did not mention them?

A: The Sinhalese? They are ruling this country, so what is this . . . ?

Q: But they form a third of the population in the eastern province.

A: Yes. So some adjustment can be made.

Q: How many seats are you confident of winning in the north and east?

A: There are 31 seats for which we are fielding 46 candidates. We have put forward some good Muslim candidates in the Vanni, like Mr. Jalaldeen who was a former Director of the Commercial Service of Radio Ceylon. Mr.Sattar, a lawyer from Kinniya who will contest Trincomalee, Mr. Abubaker Mubin from Kattankudy for Batticaloa. We are hopeful that these Muslim candidates will also win, in which case we can hope to get 24 or 25 seats in the north and east.

Q: What is the breakdown of candidates in your alliance, and who are the old TULF MPs who are contesting?

A: The TULF if fielding 17 candidates, the EPRLF 11, and the TELO and ENDLF nine each. Among the old MPs, who are contesting again are Mr. Sivasithambaram (Jaffna), Mr. Soosaithasan (Vanni), Mr. Sambandan (Trincomalee), Mr. Yogeswaran (Jaffna), Mr. Anandasangari (Kilinochchi) and myself (Batticaloa).

SLFP TO ABANDON MANIFESTO

Although the Sri Lanka Freedom Party's general election manifesto has yet to be published, it is reliably learnt that it is definitely going to drop most of the proposals contained in the Manifesto of the Peoples Democratic Alliance upon which Mrs. Bandaranaike contested the presidential elections. It is said that the new SLFP manifesto will 'reflect the party's original thinking and policies'.

The SLFP change of mind is said to result from the severe criticism to which Mrs.Bandaranaike was subjected during the election campaign mainly concerning constitutional reform and proposals to solve the ethnic issue.

The DPA manifesto, inter alia, provided for incorporation into the constitution a provision similar to Article 29 of the Soulbury Constitution under which Sri Lanka received independence in 1948. This Article prevented Parliament from enacting any legislation that had the effect of imposing any disability on any community or religion which was not imposed on other communities or religions or confer any advantage upon one comunity or religion which was not conferred upon other communities or religions. Critics characterised this aspect of the manifesto as a betrayal of Buddhism and Sinhalese as it afforded equality of treatment without any special place for the majority Sinhala Buddhist community. They argued that the previous Constitutions, both of 1972 and 1978, had entrenched a 'foremost place for Buddhism'.

The second aspect of the manifesto which was denounced was the promise to create a single Tamil unit and a single Muslim unit in the northern and eastern provinces. Critics lambasted Mrs. B for paving the way for division of the country by alleging that she had gone further than what the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement provided. Even that archetypal anti-Tamil baiter, Cyril Mathew, emerged from his enforced political hybernation and accused Mrs. B of treachery to the Sinhala race and Buddhist religion.

It would now seem that the SLFP has again succumbed to extremist pressure and had decided to shed many of the aspects of the manifesto. According to a senior spokesman of the party, it is certain that the provision to give equality of treatment to all communities and religions as envisagted in Article 29 of the 1948 Constitution will be dropped, and in its place a clause to give 'foremost place to Buddhism' will be inserted.

The provision relating to the estab lishemnt of Tamil and Muslim units in the northern and eastern provinces will be dropped, and the SLFP's opposition to the merger of the two provinces and the Provincial Council system will be reiterated.

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OPINION

Transition in Colombo

Amid the chaos spreading in Sri Lanka, aided as much by the short-sightedness of Indian policy-makers as by that of local political elements, the election of the United National Party candidate, Mr. Ranasinghe Premadasa, as the President raises the hope of an orderly transition to a new regime. It will take a good deal of blunting of one's democratic sensibilities to be able to rejoice over the conduct of the presidential poll, held in an atmosphere of terror and counter-terror: gunmen mowed down no fewer than 500 people in a month of violence and the Government, through a decree, prescribed the death penalty for poll disruption. Although Sri Lanka's friends abroad still look upon it as a democratic country, its policy was drained of the essential elements of democracy by President J.R. Jayewardene several years ago. The devices he employed to perpetuate his rule included barring the Opposition Sri Lanka Freedom Party leader, Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike, from electoral politics by taking away her civic rights and substituting referendums for elections, a procedure which was followed later by such other shining democrats as Gen. Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan and Gen. H.M. Ershad of Bangladesh. Since 1983 the island has been under a state of emergency, extended from month to month.

At the time of the presidential elections there was no authority whose writ ran all over the island, and this prevented the three candidates from campaigning effectively. Mr. Premadasa had to keep away from areas where JVP guerillas hold sway. Mrs Bandaranaike encountered hostile audiences in ares under Government control. Neither of them had access to the Tamil-majority areas, which are under virtual Indian army occupation. Mr. Oswin Abeygunasekara of the Sri Lanka Mahajana Party, who was backed by the pro-Indian Tamil parties, was the only one who was privileged to campaign there. In the circumstances, Mr. Premadasa's election, with 50.4 per cent of the votes, against Mrs. Bandaranaike's 44.6 per cent and Mr. Abeygunasekara's 4.6 per cent, does not amount to a popular mandate in the true sense. The promulgation of an indefinite curfew all over the island in the wake of the announcement of the election results is in itself a commentary on the quality of the verdict.

The best that can be said of the electoral exercise, such as it was, is that there is now a new opportunity for all concerned to join in arresting the steadily deepening crisis in the island. Mr. Premadasa's election provides for a measure of continuity. He has been the country's Prime Minister since Mr. Jayewardene promoted himself to the post of President after amending the Constitution to vest all executive powers in that office. A seasoned politician, he has demonstrated his pragmatism in recent weeks by soft-pedalling his opposition to the Indo-Sri Lankan Pact, of which he was an early and fierce critic. As one who rose from the ranks, he has good credentials for appealing to disgruntled sections of the Sinhala majority. Even if Mrs. Bandaranaike fails to respond to his post-poll call for a joint fight against fear and poverty, he can make an endeavour to reach out directly to those sections who have been getting alienated from the system progressively.

Mr. Jayewardene, keeping a promise made several weeks ago, has dissolved Parliament to pave the way for fresh elections in February. The factors which vitiated the presidential poll are bound to affect the parliamentary elections too, as in the limited time span available to him Mr. Premadasa cannot be expected to bring about a sea change.

While the Indian troops remain on the island, Mr. Premadasa cannot enjoy much credibility among the Sinhala population. The best service that India can render to Sri Lanka as a good neighbour – and to itself – at this juncture is to set an early date for the withdrawal of its forces. One factor that may make it difficult for New Delhi to do so is the certainty that the new set-up in the North-Eastern Province, which it has helped to bring into being, is certain to collapse the moment it pulls out its soldiers. The dilemma that confronts it is a direct result of the unwise course it adopted when it sought to impose its will on the Tamil groups in a perversion of its peace-keeping role. The longer the Indian army remains on the island the harder it will be for it to make an honourable exit.

Editorial, Deccan Herald, 12.12.88

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RECORD LOSS BY CEMENT CORPORATION

Hit by an almost continuous closure of its factory due to political violence in the past few years, Lanka Cement Ltd. has reported huge accumulated losses of Rs. 851.4 million at the end of its last financial year.

Overall losses during the financial year which ended 31 December 1987, alone amounted to Rs. 199.8 million. The losses incurred by the Company were primarily due to the continuing disruptions caused by violence since its factory began commercial production in 1984.

The Lanka Cement factory which is situated close to the Sri Lanka Cement Corporation in Kankesanturai in northern Jaffna, has had to shut down production lines for long stretches during the past three years. The company had to write off Rs. 15.7 million in losses due to damage to and destruction of fixed assets and material due to 'ethnic disturbances' during 1987 alone. Particularly after the killing of the factory's General Manager and Deputy General Manager in August 1987, production and distribution came to a halt. During 1988, the factory had been closed for over 200 days.

Whatever cement that was produced could not be regularly moved from the factory due to frequent disruption of transport.

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Kidnapped Sri Lankan boy freed in Madras

The Madras Police freed a 10-year old son of a Sri Lankan Tamil businessman, kidnapped for ransom from his house at Kilpauk a month ago.

The 'operation rescue' preceded by high drama led to the rounding up of a group of 26 Sri Lankan Tamil militants, led by Douglas Devanantha, from their hideouts in K.K. Nagar.

Presenting the boy, Mathivanan, and his parents to reporters, the Commissioner of Police, Mr.P. Dorai, said the police had to use all their ingenuity to outwit the abductors, who, he said, did everything to force the businessman to pay the ransom of Rs. 7 Lakhs.

Repeated telephone calls by the kidnappers heightened the parents anxiety and agony. They were on the verge of collapse when they received recently, an audio-cassette containing the boy's plea to pay off the kidnappers for his release.

Place of calls traced

With the help of the Telephones Department, the calls were traced to a public call office near the K.K. Nagar ESI hospital.

A police party, in mufti kept a continuous vigil and trapped Devanatha and his lieutenant, Ramesh, when they came to make their regular call. This led to the happy denouement of the episode.

Only four days ago the boy's parents had met the Commissioner to seek help. The episode could have ended in a tragedy had the kidnappers come to know that the police were after them.

Ordeal in captivity

Looking cheerful, but a little incoherent in his speech, Mathivanan said he was often beaten up and forced to take some tablets. He was threatened with death if his father did not pay the ransom money. He used to cry and beg them to free him.

Mr. S. Duraisingham, the 48-year old father of the boy, dealing in gems, said he used to give money to some Tamil militant groups and had since stopped the payments. On November 23 Mathivanan had gone out to buy bread in the morning when he was kidnapped by some persons who reportedly came in a jeep.

Heart-rending cries

There used to be telephone calls demanding the ransom and threatening to kill the boy if there was no response. A few days earlier, an audio-cassette was found on the portico of his house, carrying the heart-rendering cries of his son and pleading for immediate help. All the nightmarish experience ended with the safe release of the boy.

AN ACHIEVEMENT OF A LIFE TIME

In turbulent Sri Lanka no man feels as triumphant as Savumiyamurthy Thondaman, Minister of Rural Industrial Development and President of Ceylon Workers Congress. The last ten years of his life as a leader of the Indian Tamils also called the plantation Tamils have been the most shining years of his life. He has achieved the impossible.

He has led the plantation Tamils from enforced statelessness into the embrace of sudden citizenship from 1948 to 1988. He was himself disfranchised and cast out of parliament in 1952 which he re-entered as a nominated MP in 1960 and again in but as an elected member in 1977 to join the cabinet, a year later. His influence is such that even the JVP calls the Government of today the Jayawardena Thondaman Government.

Born in Tamil Nadu he arrived in Lanka as an immigrant youth, the scion of a fabulous father who had made it from rags-to-riches to become the proud and sole owner of an extensive plantation Wavendon Group, Ramboda. The same destiny that pitched-forked him into the plantations from his native village of Muna-Pudur paved his triumphant path from the Reception Committee Chairmanship of Labour Union conference of the Ceylon Indian Congress in 1940 to the pinnacle of a powerful Cabinet Minister in 1978 and ten years later he out did himself when the SRi Lankan Parliament voted unanimously to grant citizenship to all stateless persons ending a forty year period of racist discrimination against the plantation Tamils. The Thondaman saga of triumphant struggle iis recorded in his autobiography published in English in 1987.

> I would remind the House that this section of the population is really an asset to the country. We must consider them as our own indigenous workers. As I mentioned in my speech on the Vote on Account Debate about Rs.17,000 millions of foreign exchange that these plantation workers earn for this country for a year goes entirely for the payment of capital and interest on the monies that we have borrowed. Through their sweat, tears and blood they have not only enriched the wealth of this country but have also continued to find foreign exchange to meet the repayment of capital and interest annually Rs.17,000 million.
>
> *Dew Gunasekera, MP, (Communist Party of Sri Lanka) in Parliament.*

Thondaman who has completed seventy five years of life, has a proud and enviable record of leadership. The Knavesmire struggle against acquisition of a plantation ignoring the rights of workers brought out his total involvement with the cause of plantation workers. He pledged his estate Wavendon as a security to bail out 363 arrested workers. The plantation strike of April 1984 is a historic event which raised the daily wages to Rs.23.75. Being a cabinet minister he waged a struggle against the Government owned plantation management. In his time the task of nationalising the Estate Schools was completed. In his time, the plantation workers have learned to fight back against communal attacks. In his life time they have been raised to the position of playing a pivotal role in the politics of Lanka. He has created a Thondaman Foundation for the socio-economic development of the plantation community. Thondaman's indomitable courage had marked him out as a man of destiny.

> You cannot keep human beings stateless. I know that when people apply for land they are told that they are stateless persons and they cannot get land. What happens to him? There are not only Indians; there are a lot of Hindus, Christians and Muslims involved. On estates you find all these people have the same problems. I think this is a very important piece of legislation, one of the most important pieces of legislation that have come to this House.
>
> *M.L.L. Aboosally,MP and Deputy Minister of Mahaweli Development in Parliament*

In this hour of his glory one can do no better than quote Prof. Ralph Buultjens in his foreward to Thondaman's autobiography.

'There is a certain grandeur in his vision yet the hauteur of power is enwombed within a beguiling simplicity of style and manner. Such historically unusual paradoxes, capable of creating confusion and instabilities in most men, are comfortably reconciled within and through the personality of Thondaman. This ability to manage contradiction so effectively and balance them to his advantage makes Thondaman a legendary public figure a remarkable leader by the norms of any contemporary political culture'.

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Jaffna Hindu mother *seeks tall, fair, attractive, pleasant, preferably qualified bride under 32 for highly qualified, handsome son, 39, internationally recognised industrial designer, fashion coordinator, working reputable firm States, owns house, assets. Reply with horoscope, photo, details M 270, c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Hindu Tamil father *seeks qualified bridegroom for his 25 year old civil servant daughter. British citizen. Reply with horoscope and photograph to M 271, c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Hindu parents *seek qualified working partner settled in U.K. for son, 28, final year ICMA. Reply with horoscope and details M 272, c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Hindu parents *seek partner for daughter, 22, permanently settled and employed in Canada. Reply with horoscope and details to M 273, c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Tamil *sister seeks bride for brother, 33, in good employment, owns house, Reply with horoscope and details to M 274, c/o Tamil Times.*

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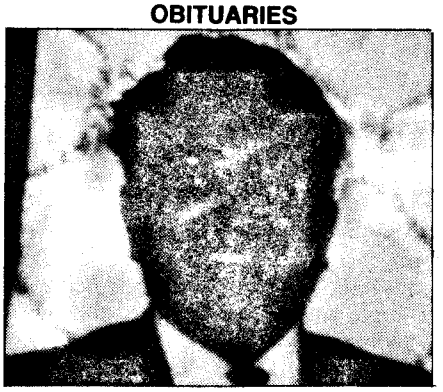
FORTHCOMING EVENTS

January 29, *3.30 p.m. The London Veena Group presents a* **Grand Veena Concert** *at the Arts Theatre Hall, Brian O'Mally Library and Arts Centre, Central Library, Walker Place, Rotherham. Tickets & Information Mr. Vatish 0709 823606*

At Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HQ Tel:01-381 3036/ 4608

February 3, 7.30 p.m. **Tabla by Alla Rakha, Zakir Hussain & Fazal Hussain Qureshi**
Feb 4, 7.30 p.m. **Mandolin** by **Master U Srinivas**
Feb 5, 7.30 p.m. **Mandalin with Tabla** by **U Srinivas & Zakir Hussain**
Feb 6, 6.30 p.m. India's Republic Day Celebrations – **Folk Dances of India**
Feb 10, 7.30 p.m. **Karnatic Vocal** by **Mrs. Sivasakti Sivanesan**
Feb 17, 7.30 p.m. **Hindustani & Karnatic Vocal plus Devotional songs** by **Dr. Premeela Gurumurti**
Feb 25, 7.30 p.m. **Hindustan Bhajans & Songs** by **Hari Om Sharan and Nandini**

OBITUARIES



Gerard Rajakarier *(31), son of Pansy and the late Angelo Rajakarier, former Director of Education, Sri Lanka, passed away after a brief illness on 28.12.88. After a brilliant school career, Gerard graduated from the University of Sheffield with a degree in Classics. He joined the Civil Service and soon rose to the rank of Higher Executive Officer. He was highly respected by his colleagues and superiors for his amiable temperament and dedication to duty. During his spare time he was active in service to the Legion of Mary and was the secretary of the Senatus. A Requiem Mass was said at St. John Fisher Church, Morden and the burial service took place at Figgs Marsh Cemetary on 5.1.89 – 1 Cleveland Avenue, London SW20.*

Mrs. S. Rajakulendran *wife of the late J. G. Rajakulendran, mother of Dr. F.A. Rajakulendran, Mr. A.J.G. Rajakulendran (U.K.), Pastor R. Rajakulendran, Vimala, and Swendrini; mother in law of Lilalani, Jeyaluxmi, Dr. S. Jebanesan and Mr. S. J. C. Kadirgamar passed away on 16.10.88 at Chundikuli, Sri Lanka.*

Mrs Kanagamany Thamby Thurai, *born in Kokuvil, Jaffna on 5.10.1908, mother of Loheswary Chelliah (U.K.), Rajeswary Pulendra (Vathiry, Pt. Pedro), Rani Thurairatnam (Kandy), the late Raj Singham K.N.M. (Retired Senior Assistant Commissioner of Police, Malaysia), and Dr. Raj Chandran (Nottingham) died in Nottingham on 7.1.89. Funeral according to Hindu rites took place on 11.1.89 – 53 Sheep Walk Lane, Ravens Head, Nottingham, NG15 9FD, U.K. Tel: 0623 557646.*

FIRST METHODIST WOMAN MINISTER IN JAFFNA

St.Peters Methodist Church, Jaffna was the venue of a simple but solemn ceremony and service on 16.10.88, when Miss Ranjitharany Ratnasingham was inducted as a Minister of the Methodist Church. Miss Ratnasingham hails from Trincomalee and had her theological education at Pilimatalawa Theological college.

VANATHI

Daughter of Mr & Mrs K. Nithiyananthan *of Osterley Middlesex had her Bharatha Natya Arangetram (dance debut) on the 7th January 1989 at the Merton Civic Hall, Wimbledon, London SW19. The evening was well attended by friends and wellwishers of the Nithiyananthan family. Mr Steven Ashcroft (Deputy Mayor of the Merton Council), Mr Shanker Shankeramurti (Tamil Osai – Tamil programme organiser BBC External Services), Mr Munral Cultural Attache of the Indian High Commission, London were guests of honour. Mr Ashcroft and Mr Shankeramurti showered praise on Vanathi after the performance.*

Vanathi started her training at the tender age of seven and is the first student of Srimathy Selvalaxmy Ramakrishnan who in turn had her tutelage under the Maestro from Kalakshetra – Balasundhari Kanagasabai (now Mrs Prathalingam presently in Swaziland)

Vanathi's eight years of dedicated training under Selvalaxmy was clearly evident in the superb pieces carefully selected by the Guru and performed by her. I would particularly mention the 'Adiduvan Nadanam' (Patham) and the 'Meenadchi Kalyanam' at the end. Her performance was highlighted by vocals by super grade artiste Srimathy Nageswary Brahmananda who sang with her daughter Varatha. Credit is also due to Adayar Balu (Mr Balakrishnan) a leading Miruthangam player who was flown down from India for this Arangetram. Dr Laxmi Jayan was on the violin. May Vanathi continue her achievements in Bharatha Natyam and maintain the highest traditions of this ancient art.

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